

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD  
BOARD MEETING SESSION – CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL WATER BOARD  
JUNE 7, 2022**

**ITEM 8**

**SUBJECT**

CONSIDERATION OF A PROPOSED RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE CENTRAL COASTAL BASIN TO ESTABLISH TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS FOR TURBIDITY IN THE GABILAN CREEK WATERSHED, MONTEREY COUNTY.

**DISCUSSION**

On February 18, 2022, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region (Central Coast Water Board) adopted [Resolution No. R3-2022-0002](#) to amend the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coastal Basin (Basin Plan) to establish total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for turbidity in the Gabilan Creek watershed (TMDL Project).

The geographic scope for this TMDL Project is the 160 square mile Gabilan Creek watershed located in the northern portion of Monterey County. Gabilan Creek is the first stream out of a series of water bodies in the watershed that starts in the relatively undisturbed Gabilan Mountains and that flows through the agricultural and urban developed lower Salinas River valley into Monterey Bay.

Waterbodies in the Gabilan Creek watershed are highly impaired year-round for turbidity. Turbidity is an optical measure of water clarity, measured in nephelometric turbidity units (NTUs). Turbidity is caused by suspended solids such as clay, silt, algae, and other microscopic organisms that reduce water clarity. The primary cause of turbidity in the Gabilan Creek watershed is suspended sediments. Ten waterbodies in this watershed are identified as impaired on the federal Clean Water Act section 303(d) List of impaired waters (303(d) List) due to excessive turbidity. Sources of turbidity in the Gabilan Creek watershed include urban stormwater runoff, industrial and construction stormwater, grazing, agricultural stormwater and irrigation runoff, and pumping causing stream and channel bank erosion and/or resuspension of bed sediments.

This TMDL Project establishes numeric targets for turbidity and the restoration of biological conditions in the Gabilan Creek watershed. The turbidity numeric targets are established from reference sites that represent conditions that would naturally occur in the Gabilan Creek watershed. Because turbidity pollution severely impacts instream plant, algae, and benthic invertebrate (e.g., aquatic insects) communities, which are the foundations of aquatic ecosystems, this TMDL Project also establishes biological condition numeric targets.

The turbidity TMDLs, also referred to as the load capacities of the waterbodies, in the Gabilan Creek watershed, are the same numeric value as the turbidity numeric targets. Turbidity TMDLs are allocated to point and non-point sources of turbidity in the watershed.

The Gabilan Creek watershed TMDL Project includes an implementation plan that identifies the regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms that responsible parties will use to achieve TMDL allocations. The implementation plan establishes an attainment schedule of twenty-years for responsible parties to meet their final allocations. The attainment schedule also includes seven and fifteen-year interim milestones to measure progress towards achieving the final allocations.

### **POLICY ISSUE**

Should the State Water Board approve the amendment to the Basin Plan to establish TMDLs for turbidity and the implementation plan to restore water quality and aquatic habitats in the Gabilan Creek watershed?

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Central Coast Water Board and State Water Board staff resources associated with or resulting from this action will be addressed with existing and future budgeted resources.

### **REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT**

Yes, approval of this resolution will amend the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coastal Basin.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That the State Water Board:

1. Approve the amendment to the Basin Plan adopted under Central Coast Water Board Resolution No. R3-2022-0002.
2. Authorize the Executive Director or designee to submit the approved amendment adopted under Central Coast Water Board Resolution No. R3-2022-0002 and the administrative record for this action to the Office of Administrative Law and the TMDL Project to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval.